

"Be His Friend as He was Mine"

"I see him by the open grave, mute, motionless, uncovered, suffering for the death of him who in life fought against his freedom. I see him, when the mound is heaped and the great drama of his life is closed, turn away and with downcast eyes and uncertain step, start out into new and strange fields, faltering, struggling, but moving on, till his shambling figure is lost in the light of this better and brighter day. And from the grave comes a voice saying, 'Follow him. Put your arms about him in his need, even as he puts his arms about me. Be his friend as he was mine.' And out into this new world — strange to me as to him, dazzling, bewildering both — I follow. And may God forget my people when they forget these."

"The Breach is ever Widening"

Few southern men who have passed through such experiences as those can refer to them without emotion. To recognize the beauty of such relations is not to condone slavery. Those relations were the triumph of human feeling over conditions that were abnormal and essentially unjust. One would have thought that those bonds of affection would have guaranteed amicable relations under the change of conditions, and they have in many cases outlived the storm and stress of the new time. But it is sadly recognized by southern men that the breach between white and black is ever widening.

"Experience Bitter as Death"

It may be confessed that northern men have not always sympathized with southern men in their view of this whole question. Most northern men have reached their conclusions through a course of reasoning; most southern men through a course of experience, bitter as death. It is hard for either to look at the matter through the eyes of the other, and yet both would profit by taking the other's point of view. If northern men, out of sympathy with the Negro, have in the past been unjust to the South, they will not mend matters if now through sympathy with the white South they shall be unjust to the Negro.

"Pray, then, for My People"

For another pathetic thing in our recent history is the way in which the Negro's hopes have been dashed, that for him emancipation meant freedom. Freedom in one sense it has undoubtedly brought, but the Negroes are not free men in the sense in

which Anglo-Saxons understand the term. Not since emancipation has the outlook seemed so dark to the Negro as it does to-day. He stands dazed, like a man rudely awakened out of a beautiful dream, and, though a native American, he finds it hard to sing,

"My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty."

For the question lies deep in his heart, "Is this a 'land of liberty'?"

"Are you a Christian?" asked a Negro woman in Boston a few weeks ago of one who was a stranger to her. "I am." "Will you not pray, then, for my poor people, that they may have patience?" The Negro never needed our sympathy and help more than he needs it to-day.

"Have Idealized the Negro"

It has been charged that the friends of the Negro have idealized him. There is truth in the charge. Many gained their idea of the Negro from "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and the picture of Uncle Tom and his sufferings have stood for them for the Negro and his wrongs.

In a way many southern men have done the same. They have clung to the beautiful picture of the faithful "uncle" or "auntie" of a bygone time, as if the relations then sustained with the Negroes were the ideal relations. One hears proposals that the thing to do now is to go back forty years and try to restore the old relations once more.

But the "ante-bellum Negro" is not the Negro of to-day. He was a product of conditions that can never be restored; but he has a vast progeny, and it is the Negro of to-day that makes our problem.

In conversation in a southern city a few weeks ago a clergyman spoke of his deep affection for his old black nurse and his early love for Negro folk. "Yes," I said, "that is beautiful and I sympathize with you in it. But what place have you in your scheme of things for your black mammy's grandson?" "Ah," he said, "that is the question."

In that same city there is a college erected and maintained by a southern church for the higher education of Negroes. In its chapel there is a beautiful memorial window, placed there by a southern white man, bearing this inscription:

IN MEMORY OF AUNT EVE, BLACK MAMMY OF
REV. DAVID MORTON, D.D.